



News Release

STATE OF MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

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DPSCS Salutes Parole and Probation Agents For Their Outstanding Community Supervision Efforts Across Maryland

TOWSON, MD (July 16, 2008)---Maryland's Division of Parole and Probation (DPP) salutes its more than 800 agents and drinking driver monitors during national Probation, Parole, and Community Supervision Week, July 13-19. The week is an annual effort to laud the critical supervision efforts of ex-offenders by unsung heroes in the world of public safety.

As of June 30, Maryland DPP agents supervised an astonishing 70,246 cases---18,628 of them in Baltimore City alone. Drivers convicted of alcohol-related offenses and ordered into DPP's Drinking Driver Monitor Program accounted for more than 15,000 of the statewide total. DPP agents work from more than 40 offices in all 23 Maryland counties as well as Baltimore City.

DPP's recent Violence Prevention Initiative has been hailed by the courts, prosecutors, and law enforcement alike for helping to slow the rate of violent crime in Baltimore City. Below is an editorial which appeared in the Baltimore Sun on July 16 addressing that issue.

The Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services salutes the men and women of its Division of Parole and Probation for their effort to make life safer in communities across the state.

Members of the media are welcome to call DPSCS at the numbers above to arrange for a story about the DPP agents in their local communities.

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(From the Baltimore Sun)

Tough on probationers

Our view: Violence prevention strategy shows state's resolve

July 16, 2008

There are few second chances for a select group of criminals under supervision by the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation. And it's easy to see why. They are under 30, have at least seven prior arrests, and have been convicted of a violent crime or felony drug sales. One slip-up - a dirty urine test, a missed appointment, an arrest they forgot to mention to a probation officer - and they're busted for violating their probation. This is not your usual crime prevention program, but Baltimore's chronic level of violence demands such vigilance.

The probation agency's enhanced supervision of offenders with lengthy criminal histories who are identified as a public safety risk is a preventive strike against violence that some have credited with helping slow the homicide rate in Baltimore. The strategy is pushing people inside and outside the agency to think differently - and some judges are pushing back. The division's philosophy is simple enough: Probation is a privilege, and the targeted offenders have to obey the rules. They mess up and an agent moves to revoke their probation.

This strict interpretation affects about 960 probationers and parolees who are enrolled in the violence-prevention initiative, a fraction of the 54,000 people under the agency's supervision. Some judges are reluctant to issue a no-bail warrant in these cases, as requested by probation agents, without convincing evidence that the offender poses an imminent threat to the public. An arrest record alone shouldn't be the determining factor, and probation agents should be prepared to provide a judge with more information to support their no-bail request.

But these offenders aren't novices - most (783) have been arrested on a new offense, not a technical violation of their probation. At their age, they are on a fast track to becoming career criminals and potentially jeopardizing the lives of others as they go.

Baltimore has suffered through a decade and more of an unacceptably high rate of killing. Probationers too often have been caught up in the violence, and the agency has been criticized for lapses in supervision. Aggressively, but fairly, enforcing the rules has the potential to change lives and save them.

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